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ABSTRACT

This preliminary study reviews the journals of two teachers working side-by-side, a supervising teacher/mentor and a student teacher. The student teacher, a certification student, had a business degree, had worked in the business world for three years, and wanted to become an elementary classroom teacher. The supervising teacher, an experienced master teacher, taught fourth grade in a team with two other teachers in a suburban, open space elementary school. In this study both teachers maintain journals regarding their individual perceptions of this common induction experience. A wealth of information is revealed in the journals of both teachers about the process of teacher induction. Preliminary analyses of the data indicate that several areas of concern are common to both persons: both express anxiety about the lack of time to do all that is required and the need for flexibility. Differences appear to occur in terms of on-the-job experience and its concomitant confidence factor. The question remains about how best to attack the information so as to make it useful for those responsible for the continuing induction of both preservice and inservice classroom teachers. (JD)

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Journaling: A Lens for Looking at a Mentor and a Beginning Teacher Working Together

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Journaling: A Lens for Looking at a Mentor and a Beginning Teacher Working Together

Introduction

A colleague and I have been investigating teacher induction for some time using a variety of instrumentation. In particular, we have analyzed various journal entries with the hopes of determining the inductive characteristics of beginning teachers as well as their priorities and concerns. In the past, we used journals of field work to determine "domains (general categories) and included terms (subcategories)" (Spradley, 1980) that appeared with some frequency in the writings of several field experience students. Some examples may be helpful.

DOMAIN	INCLUDED TERM	JOURNAL ENTRY
Assessment	self assessment	I think I did a good job today.
View of Work	organization of class activity	I can see that pacing for reading groups is needed.
Practical Skills	an idea works	We got a chance to copy down neat bulletin board ideas.
Attitude	anxiety	I can't wait for Friday!
Personal Relations	interaction with child	Sarah gave me a nice hug on her way to lunch.
Investment	commitment to teaching	Teaching means so much to me now.

See Appendix I for the complete system used.

The six general categories were used to establish a global picture of the priorities and concerns of the various students examined. These pictures were helpful in presenting patterns and variations in the student comments. In turn, comparisons could be made about these patterns and variations.

This study, preliminary in nature, represents a slight shift from our previous investigations in that it reviews the journals of two teachers working together side-by-side. One teacher is the supervising teacher or mentor and the other is a student teacher or beginning teacher, who has been assigned to work with the supervising teacher. In this study both teachers maintain journals regarding their individual perceptions of this common induction experience. We continue to use the category system derived from earlier studies for our analysis of the data generated during this experience.

Subjects

The first subject of this study, the student teacher, was a certification student. The young woman had a degree in business, had worked in the business world for three years and wanted to become an elementary classroom teacher. Prior to this initial field experience, preliminary to student teaching, the student took various continuing education courses to complete her certification requirements. The Differentiated Student Teaching experience was for ten consecutive days in an elementary school during the January Minimester. The experience was the equivalent of the initial field experience in the methods block normally undertaken by full-time students during the regular semester. The subject was 24 years of age, single, white, middle/middle in terms of her socio-economic status, and she had a 3.3 GPA.

The second subject, the supervising teacher, was an experienced master teacher, who taught fourth grade in a team with

two other teachers in a changing suburban, open space elementary school in a large metropolitan school system. She has been a supervising teacher for several years and been both a supervising teacher for student teachers as well as for the students engaged in the methods block field experiences. She was 46 years of age, married, white, upper/middle in terms of her socio-economic status, and she possessed a master's degree equivalency. Both individuals were willing participants in the project and agreed to maintain journals regarding their individual perceptions of this common induction experience. A wealth of information is revealed in the journals of both teachers about the process of teacher induction.

Profile Basis

In the following paper, profiles of the two subjects are developed in an attempt to move beyond the data to reviewing and perfecting student and program analysis. The following questions were considered: What are the priorities and/or concerns of those persons who participate in the induction process? Are the priorities and concerns of student teachers and supervising teachers alike or different? What effect does this knowledge about the priorities and concerns of teachers, preservice or inservice, have upon undergraduate teacher education programs? Since the socialization of teachers is so complex at either level, it seems appropriate to examine comparatively the two participants in this induction process. In so doing, the six domains (general categories), described previously, are used as a basis for studying the daily journal entries or findings collected from the two subjects.

Assessment

"Well, I think my lesson was pretty good. I was nervous and I'm sure I showed it in the beginning but I tried to deal with it," wrote the student teacher after her first lesson. The supervising teacher wrote about the same lesson, I assumed that she would put the board work up. . . She was ready mentally for the lesson. . . but no objective was written for the children, the overhead projector needed to be aligned and previously run dittoes needed to be at her fingertips. I 'reviewed' good learning/listening skills with the children while she quickly 'readied' her materials. I did work as a partner, but let her fly alone, too, and I think she felt 'in charge.'"

With another lesson, the student teacher wrote, ". . . I taught a reading lesson and was scared to death but Mrs. _____ thought I did fine. I know it could have been better but I also might be too critical of myself as well . . . it's hard to concentrate on what you're trying to teach in addition to motivating and disciplining." The supervising teacher wrote, "She was full of questions about her lesson in reading--not the review, as that was merely a game, but questions about the materials and procedures for the lesson about the index of the encyclopedia. These seem to be the things I covered with her yesterday as we planned the lesson, but she verbalized a lack of confidence in 'getting through' the lesson, fearing she would forget what to say . . . I felt like a mother bird pushing her little one out of the nest to fly!"

By the end, however, the student teacher wrote, "This experience was so good for me and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The school, faculty and kids were very good--for the most part. I even enjoyed the open space!" The supervising teacher wrote, "I'll miss _____--it has been fun--and I feel like I have given her some tools to boost her confidence!"

View of Work

The first day the student teacher wrote, "Boy, you just don't understand what a teacher goes through in a day until you observe and participate! Although it is a lot of work, it sure seems exciting." Later, she wrote, "I'm still overwhelmed by all of the things a teacher has to know, prepare and do. I just never imagined it would be so much." Still later, she wrote, "I really feel that my mind is just overloaded with all kinds of information that sometimes I wonder how I'll ever make it through my first year."

On the other hand, the supervising teacher wrote the following, "I know, from past experience, that the 'free planning time' in my schedule will be used preparing her for her observing, teaching, etc. and I will have extra 'homework' . . . or "I still wonder how we maintain a calm outer 'self' as we frantically keep the schedule going despite daily 'unknown additions' which are a part of our assumed flexibility!" She wrote about the student teacher, "The pace of coming every day and building responsibility for more and more activities is really tough--I wonder if _____ is just VERY tired--or getting sick!"

Practical Skills

"I went around the room gathering ideas and making copies of things for my own collection," wrote the student teacher on more than one occasion. While the supervising teacher wrote, ". . . we found coat space, put lunch into the faculty refrigerator, introduced her to teaching partners, and set her up with a desk of her own and an observation guide (prepared to help her notice the routines, etc. in class)." "I went over objective writing and a lesson plan format (briefly)." "I demonstrated several overhead techniques during social studies and in math used Mrs. McGillicuddee as a drill (I did get a ditto packet of game ideas for Mrs. McG. at the faculty meeting--got one for _____, too!) also used M. Hunter Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down. I'm trying not to assume that she is noticing the 'tricks of the trade' but it's unbelievable how much more thinking it takes for me to keep lessons motivating, maintain routines, include _____, and at the same time try to think about what she is seeing and what she should notice as the day is progressing!" "_____ is still avidly collecting materials and ideas in her free minutes!," she wrote toward the end of her student teacher's experience.

Attitude

The student teacher wrote after her first day, "I enjoyed my first day and I'm glad, so far anyway, that I'm at _____. At first I wasn't too excited about being in the open space setting, but I can see some of the advantages that I did not consider such as the team work among teachers and there doesn't seem to be as

many bulletin boards!!" Later, she wrote, "I'm very glad to have the opportunity to be at _____. I've met almost, if not all, of the faculty and they've made me feel very welcomed. I hope that when I get a teaching job, it will be in a congenial school like _____." Still later, she wrote, "Another eventful day at _____ --I'm really enjoying it!" At the end, she wrote, "I can't believe it's been two weeks! When I look back, it seems that I just started although I personally feel as if I've come a long way."

From the first, the supervising teacher wrote such things as "I love working with these students and learn so much from them as well as about myself as I work with each one!" "What fun it was to hear _____ relate the experiences of 'her day' after I left yesterday."

Personal Relations

"Mrs. _____ is very nice and made me feel very welcomed. I'm sure that I will learn a lot from her. She has so much enthusiasm--I just hope I can project that same level of interest as she because I think it's very important." Meeting her new class brought this response, "The kids were great to me today. I suppose I should savor those memories. Not that I expect them to misbehave around me but I'm sure I'll have to contend with someone who doesn't want to cooperate before my term is up." Later she wrote about one young man, "Like I said, he's a nice boy, but it's frustrating to have to keep disciplining as well as motivating him to do his work." She continued to be pleased with her supervising

teacher, ". . . Mrs. _____ is such a good teacher--she makes it all look so easy!" With respect to her class, she wrote, "Today the kids really gave me a run for the money! They were really trying to aggravate me today but they didn't quite succeed. I felt that I had fairly good control, but they were really testing me today."

The supervising teacher's immediate reaction to her student teacher was, "_____ arrived dressed for success--how delightful!" "First impressions--she's quiet yet not unsure, neat and tidy and older than the 'college crew' in her dress for the profession--eager to get started!" Later, she wrote, "She is doing well in the classroom--she has a very good manner with the children . . ."

Investment

The student teacher did write toward the end of her experience, "One aspect of teaching that could become a chore is the after hours work that is involved. Not that I mind bringing work home, but I have this feeling that I am going to be overwhelmed planning, preparing, grading papers, etc., that I am not going to have time in my life for anything else. That concerns me a bit, but maybe with a little more time and experience, it will not be as much as I anticipate. Right now, I just have this fear of never getting any sleep or socializing with anyone over ten years old!" At the end, she wrote, "Although my self confidence is not to where it can fully be, it will be--I'm confident of that! I know I have come a long way over the years and I am sure that I want to teach."

The supervising teacher wrote, "I like to do lots of long range planning in preparation for the student--in _____'s case I worked out daily plans for the two weeks so that all my time at school could be devoted to working with her." At the end of the experience, she wrote, "I enjoy working with Curriculum I (methods block) students!"

Conclusions and Implications

Preparing profiles about different teachers continues to be illuminating. This qualitative study has attempted to describe some of the priorities and concerns of a supervising teacher and her student teacher. Preliminary analyses of the data indicate that several areas of concern are common to both the mentor and the beginning teacher: both express anxiety about the lack of time to do all that is required and the need for flexibility. Differences appear to occur, in terms of on-the-job experience and its concomitant confidence factor. The question remains about how best to attack the information, so as to make it useful for those responsible for the continuing induction of both preservice and inservice classroom teachers.

Interestingly, the supervising teacher came to four conclusions about her work with student teachers. She wrote:

1) Teach strategy of a good lesson
   a) work with developing an objective including what is to be learned and the task/evaluation the students will be involved in. This is to be done before planning the procedures.
   b) develop a step-by-step procedure.
   c) relate the summary of the lesson to the objective.

2) Set up a definitive discipline plan as well as some positive motivation schemes.
3) Build the student teacher's confidence
   a) hand the student a skeleton plan to be developed together and the motivation/materials necessary to execute the lesson successfully. As experience develops less guidance from the supervising teacher will be necessary.
   b) begin superficial long-range planning with the student as soon as daily routines and individual lesson skills are well underway.
4) Demonstrate the benefits of team planning, teaching and material preparation.

Lastly, the supervising teacher wrote, "Lesson plan format expectations should be shared from the beginning--more information about the students' experiences working with children in and out of the classroom would help supervising teachers determine: 1) what would be a challenge, 2) what flexibility to expect in the student teacher, and 3) how quickly to expect to 'wean' the student without shaking his/her confidence."

This investigator still believes that intensive examination of journals can be enlightening, but how to fully study the data gathered from the journals continues to remain a question. The results of these two profiles may or may not be representative of most elementary preservice or inservice teachers; however, their evolution as professionals, at either level, was evident in their journal entries. Teacher education programs will be more effective when we personalize them to more appropriately meet the needs of the students and their supervising teachers. Continuing qualitative research is necessary to make this a reality.

At the conclusion of her chapter about teacher induction in the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Huling-Austin (1990) raises two questions:

1. To what degree do teacher induction programs change teacher attitudes about professional development and the desirability of the teaching profession?
2. What are the long-range effects of attitude changes on teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, and efforts to recruit new talent into teaching?

These are hard questions that are difficult to answer, but perhaps the two teachers described in this paper provide us with some clues in their journal entries.

APPENDIX

Appendix I

CATEGORY SYSTEM FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES

VIEW OF WORK

- Indicate theory to practice
- Reflects on child development
- Notes problem sense
- Reflection on teaching/planning
- Interprets child behavior
- Notes organization of class
- Contrasts teaching situations
- Getting "handle" on the work

PRACTICAL SKILLS

- Idea gain
- Idea confusion
- Something works or or doesn't work
- Fitting into system
- Observation/description of an idea or skill

ATTITUDE

- Positive reaction to situation
- Frustration or negative reaction to situation
- Anxiety, suspicion or doubt about situation
- Empathy with other
- Objective outlook

INVESTMENT

- Indicates missionary zeal and spirit
- States a commitment to teaching
- Indicates concern over drive/interest
- Notes negative drive

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Friendly or negative interaction with child
- Friendly or negative interaction with teacher
- Interacts with parents or others
- Reflects on problems with others

ASSESSMENT

- Assesses self positive or negative
- Assesses others
- Assesses the system
- Notes assessment from others

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